



The Disaster Mental Health Maze: Journey of the PAMRC

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The Palo Alto Medical Reserve Corps

- Located in Palo Alto, CA
- Previously focused solely on disaster mental health education and outreach
- Developed 3-stage intervention as alternative to CISM
- Currently expanding services to include medical and mental health response in addition to education programs

First Steps...

- Initially intended to develop a response corps of mental health services providers
- Met resistance within local area and throughout the state given abundance of such organizations and difference of opinion re. interventions, response areas, etc.
- Took a step back and evaluated status
- Education and outreach niche

Education and Outreach

- Assembled team of experts
- Developed 3-stage intervention alternative
- Offered courses for licensed professionals

Education and Outreach

- Conducted outreach at community level and shaped relationships with other volunteer organizations in the community
- Conducted outreach for non-mental health responders (e.g. trauma resource training for police departments)
- Consulted for organizations throughout the nation

3-Stage Model

- Why it was developed
 - International cautions re. CISM
 - Address psychological consequences rather than specific disorders
- How it was developed
 - Assembled from current research findings by leading experts based on key information such as high recovery rates and the need for strategy to address triage and ongoing care

3-Stage Model

- The 3 Stages of Care
 - Psychological First Aid
 - Intermediate Support
 - Anxiety Management and Coping
 - Ongoing Assistance
 - Two options based on coping style
 - Support/Coping and Exposure
- For more information
 - Book by J. Housley and L. Beutler, PhD
 - Part of Advances in Psychotherapy – Evidence Based Practice Series by Hogrefe and Huber Publishers
 - <http://www.hhpublish.com/>

Hurricane Katrina

- Original Mission
 - Offer disaster mental health care via 3-stage model to survivors and responders in Houston, TX
- Roadblock: CISM and Response Organizations
- Altered Mission
 - Offer training in alternatives to CISM for professionals in Houston, TX
- Mission Accomplished

Reported Impressions Affecting Provision of Services

- Failure to offer alternatives to CISD
- Professionals being turned away
- Survivors preferred “wandering” professionals rather than localized mental health services
- Majority of energy spent attending to pharmacological and substance dependence issues

Reported Impressions Affecting Provision of Services

- Smaller efforts by smaller organization viewed more favorably
- Frustrations with media portrayal
- Emphasis on importance of community-level response
- Lack of understanding re. role of psychology in disaster and terrorist events

Application of Knowledge

- Based on staff experience following Hurricane Katrina, PAMRC Directors decided to steer the PAMRC to:
 - Include additional services
 - Shape a response corps of not only trainers, but a wide range of service providers as well
 - Work collaboratively with nationwide efforts to determine “Best Practice” models for disaster mental health care
 - Increase activities aimed at raising public awareness of the fundamental role psychology plays in disaster and terrorism

Looking Ahead

- Secure additional funding
- Maintain pragmatic, flexible and collaborative philosophy
- Develop cooperative relationships with other MRC's (San Mateo County MRC)
- Broaden to also address specific needs of children
- Continue to recognize the key role of the community in response and remain dedicated to outreach as well as response
- Continue to strive to provide first responders with services to meet their unique needs efficiently and effectively

Looking Ahead

- Draw on lessons learned from the PAMRC's past and other MRC's in shaping the future of the PAMRC
- Work closely with Mental Health Working Group/Task Force to assist in the process of identifying "Best Practice" models for mental health response
- Remain enthusiastic about the nationwide MRC program and remain supportive of fellow volunteers